

29 November 2000

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Inappropriate Use of Electronic Mail (E-mail)

1. PURPOSE. To explain the permissible and impermissible uses of E-mail by DOD employees (military and civilian) at Fort Sam Houston.

2. FACTS. DOD employees should use e-mail resources responsibly and abide by normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct at all times. Inappropriate use of DOD e-mail systems may be a basis for consideration of disciplinary action. Sending or receiving E-mail is treated similar to the use of a government telephone. In the first instance, it is your superior/supervisor's responsibility to determine whether a particular use is permitted.

a. Employees will not use e-mail resources in a way that would:

- (1) Interfere with official duties;
- (2) Undermine readiness;
- (3) Be incompatible with public service;
- (4) Further any unlawful activity;
- (5) Adversely affect or overburden the communication system (such as broadcasts, group mailings, e-mail chain letters); or
- (6) Reflect adversely on DOD or the Army (such as uses involving pornography, chain letters, unofficial advertising, soliciting or selling except on authorized bulletin boards established for such use).

b. Personal e-mail communications using government resources must:

- (1) Constitute an official or authorized use of e-mail;
- (2) Be of reasonable duration and frequency, and whenever possible, made during the DOD employee's personal time such as before or after duty hours or during lunch periods;
- (3) Serve a legitimate public interest (such as keeping DOD employees at their desks rather than requiring the use of commercial systems); and
- (4) Create no significant additional cost to DOD or the Army.

c. Accordingly, DOD employees will not send:

- (1) Broadcasts of unnecessary advertisements of Army services;
- (2) Letter-bombs, that is, send the same E-mail repeatedly to one or more recipients to interfere with the recipient's use of E-mail;
- (3) Broadcast e-mail messages of daily quotations, top 10 lists, jokes, or other similar transmissions;
- (4) Broadcasts of unsubstantiated virus warnings from sources other than Systems Administrators;

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(5) Messages to large audiences and send repeats of the same messages as reminders;

(6) Spam, that is, exploit list servers or other group broadcast systems for purposes beyond their intended scope to provide widespread distribution of unsolicited E-mail;

(7) Threatening or harassing (to include sexual harassment) E-mails;

(8) E-mail announcing events sponsored by a non-Federal entity without the prior approval of your supervisor;

(9) Sexually-oriented material;

(10) Extremist or terrorist material;

(11) Offensive or obscene material (This includes, but is not limited to, material that demeans or ridicules others on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, disability, or national origin);

(12) E-mail involving gambling;

(13) E-mail involving partisan political activity;

(14) Unsolicited, mass distribution E-mail involving religious exhortation or proselytization (This does not prohibit personal consensual communication between individuals on religious subjects);

(15) E-mail conducting the business of private organizations;

(16) Agency information to external newsgroups; bulletin boards, or other public forums without authority;

(17) E-mail concerning a non-Federal matter that creates the perception the communication was made in one's official capacity as a federal employee;

(18) Unauthorized E-mail transmitting information protected under the Privacy Act, the Procurement Integrity Act, 18 U.S.C. §794 ("inside" information), or 18 U.S.C. §1905; or

(19) E-mail assuming another's identity by using his or her account or password (Spoofing).

d. Permissible uses of e-mail include, but are not limited to:

(1) E-mailing directions to visiting relatives;

(2) Checking with a spouse or minor children;

(3) Scheduling doctor and auto repair appointments;

(4) E-mailing a short message to a fellow employee;

(5) Receiving E-mail, as long as comparable receipt would be acceptable by telephone, and use is not more disruptive than a telephone call; and

(6) Sending e-mail (routine correspondence) to your children at college.

e. Refer any questions to your supervisor or to the Chief, Administrative and Civil Law Division, OSJA, at 221-2373.